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House of Representatives

The House met at 10:30 a.m. and was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. ISRAEL).

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following communication from the Speaker:

WASHINGTON, DC,
January 29, 2008.

I hereby appoint the Honorable STEVE ISRAEL to act as Speaker pro tempore on this day.

NANCY PELOSI,
Speaker of the House of Representatives.

MORNING-HOUR DEBATE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 4, 2007, the Chair will now recognize Members from lists submitted by the majority and minority leaders for morning-hour debate.

The Chair will alternate recognition between the parties, with each party limited to 30 minutes and each Member, other than the majority and minority leaders and the minority whip, limited to 5 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. HOYER).

HONORING THE LIFE OF GWEN BRITT

Mr. HOYER. Mr. Speaker, today, along with my colleagues from the Maryland delegation, I want to take this opportunity to honor the life and legacy of a beloved figure from our State who passed into God's hands on January 12, State Senator Gwen Britt.

Gwen lived a full, wonderful life. She was a wife, a mother, a grandmother, legislator, a civil rights leader and a friend. But she also was an inspiration, a woman of deep faith and conviction, with an unshakable commitment to

achieving justice, equality and fairness in our Nation.

The former Gwendolyn Greene grew up in northeast Washington at a time when our Nation was failing to live up to its promise of equal opportunity. She knew the racial divisions that existed in this segregated city, in our schools, in our stores, even in our parks.

And so in 1960, as an 18-year-old student activist of Howard University, Gwen and members of the District of Columbia's non-violent action group decided to take a stand. She walked into the Montgomery County park, then segregated, and tried to climb aboard a horse on a merry-go-round; something that all of us today would think is normal for any American, particularly any young American.

Yet as the Washington Post reported, the students' actions, as innocent and as unprovocative as they seem today, sparked 5 days of protests, and Gwen and other activists were arrested for trespassing, spat upon and harassed by counter-demonstrators.

This experience left Gwen undeterred. In fact, it fortified her already strong character, as well as her determination to do what she knew in her mind and in her heart was right.

Gwen took to heart Dr. King's words, "Make a career of humanity, and you will make a greater person of yourself, a greater Nation of your country and a finer world to live in." So said Martin Luther King, Jr.

Gwen Britt took that to heart. So she did make our Nation a finer place in which to live. That experience in Glen Echo Park was only the beginning of Gwen's civil rights work.

She left Howard University to join the Freedom Riders who challenged Jim Crow laws in the South and in our transportation system. And in 1961, she spent 40 days in a Mississippi jail for sitting in a whites-only train station.

JOHN LEWIS was one of Gwen Britt's friends. JOHN LEWIS, a hero, a Member

of this body. More people know about JOHN LEWIS because of his extraordinary leadership, but Gwen Britt was there by his side on Freedom Rides.

It is a testament to Gwen Britt's humility and quiet confidence that she never advertised her proud and very important civil rights work.

As Maryland State Delegate Victor Ramirez of Prince George's County recently said, "She talked about the civil rights movement if you brought it up, but she was one of those people who spoke softly but carried a big stick."

Since her passing, words of tribute have poured forth. Governor Martin O'Malley noted, "She was a leader long before her years in the Senate." How true that is. Lieutenant Governor Anthony Brown called her a "principled, active and fair-minded voice for equality."

And Prince George's County executive Jack Johnson said she was "one of the most honest people you ever met." And on The Washington Post's Web site, people who knew Gwen posted words of sympathy and tribute.

For example, Katey Boerner, the executive director of the Glen Echo Park Partnership for Arts and Culture, has said some, almost 50 years after the demonstration that occurred to open up Glen Echo's amusements to people of all colors, "We plan to include her story of bravery and shepherding change in our upcoming civil rights exhibition here at the park. We can now treasure her memory for the amazing story that was her life and the impact that she had on so many through her leadership."

Not surprisingly, Gwen Britt also made an important impact in the State Senate after she was elected in 2002. She rose to the position of deputy majority leader in 2007 and became an unwavering voice for those who have felt the cold chill of exclusion.

□ This symbol represents the time of day during the House proceedings, e.g., □ 1407 is 2:07 p.m.

Matter set in this typeface indicates words inserted or appended, rather than spoken, by a Member of the House on the floor.



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